

Mapping Mongolia

Situating Mongolia in the World from
Geologic Time to the Present

Edited by Paula L.W. Sabloff



MAPPING MONGOLIA

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Geologic Time to the Present

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EDITED BY

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This book was printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

*This volume is dedicated to all our Mongolian
friends and colleagues.*

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Penn Museum International Research Conferences

Foreword

For more than a century, a core mission of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has been to foster research that leads to new understandings about human culture. For much of the 20th century, this research took the form of worldwide expeditions that brought back both raw data and artifacts whose analysis continues to shed light on early complex societies of the New and Old worlds. The civilizations of pharonic Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, China, Mexico, and Central America are represented in galleries that display only the most remarkable of Penn Museum's vast holding of artifacts. These collections have long provided primary evidence for many distinct research programs engaging scholars from around the world.

As we moved into a new century, indeed a new millennium, Penn Museum sought to reinvigorate its commitment to research focused on questions of human societies. In 2005, working with then Williams Director Richard M. Leventhal, Michael J. Kowalski, Chairman of the Board of Overseers of the Penn Museum, gave a generous gift to the Museum to seed a new program of high-level conferences designed to engage themes central to the Museum's core research mission. According to Leventhal's vision, generating new knowledge and frameworks for understanding requires more than raw data and collections. More than ever, it depends on collaboration among communities of scholars investigating problems using

distinct lines of evidence and different modes of analysis. Recognizing the importance of collaborative and multidisciplinary endeavors in the social sciences, Penn Museum used the gift to launch a program of International Research Conferences that each brought together ten to fifteen scholars who have reached a critical point in their consideration of a shared problem.

During the three years until the spring of 2008, it was my privilege to identify, develop, run, and now to oversee the publication of eight such conferences. The dozen or so papers for each conference were submitted to all participants one month in advance of the meeting. The fact that the papers were circulated beforehand meant that no time was lost introducing new material to the group. Rather, after each paper was briefly summarized by its author, an intense and extended critique followed that allowed for sustained consideration of the contribution that both the data and the argument made to the larger questions. The discussions of individual papers were followed by a day discussing crosscutting issues and concluded with an overarching synthesis of ideas.

Mapping Mongolia: Situating Mongolia in the World from Geologic Time to the Present was the third conference of the series, held in the late spring of 2007. It is the second of the conferences to see publication. As Series Editor, I look forward to six more volumes that will appear over the next few years. The publication of the results of these conferences allows the new knowledge and understanding that they achieved to be shared broadly and to contribute to the uniquely human enterprise of self understanding.

HOLLY PITTMAN

Series Editor

Deputy Director for Academic Programs Penn Museum 2005–2008

Curator, Near East Section

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Preface and Acknowledgments: “–Scaping” Mongolia

PAULA L.W. SABLOFF

When I first started conducting research in Mongolia, I found that I could make a room full of anthropologists jealous by telling them where I worked. To a discipline whose members pride themselves on working in exotic locations, Mongolia is a glamorous research site, for few Western and even fewer American anthropologists had worked there during the Cold War.¹ Young anthropologists started to trickle in during the early 1990s: Norwegian, Danish, and French graduate students; Christopher Kaplonski, Peter Marsh, and Katherine Petrie from the United States; and, of course, the University of Cambridge research group (Mongolian and Inner Asian Studies Unit) headed by Caroline Humphrey and now David Sneath. So anthropology, my discipline, was becoming interested in Mongolia.

But the field of area studies was not showing much interest. The area studies approach groups geographically contiguous nation-states according to a common history and shared set of traits, such as religion or political organization (Appadurai 1996:16). Some nation-states fall through the cracks of these groupings. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Mongolia became one such country. At the 2003 Association for Asian Studies annual meeting in New York (which was held in conjunction with the Mongolia Society meeting), I spoke with a publications representative of the

Institute of East Asian Studies at University of California–Berkeley about possibly publishing my research with them. She looked interested but said they had never considered Mongolian manuscripts before. When the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES) Program at the University of Pennsylvania, which easily accommodated Mongolia, split into the Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the East Asian Languages and Civilizations centers, I requested that Mongolia be placed in the East Asian Center. Luckily, I had met G. Cameron Hurst, Director of the latter, before. As he is an historian of Japan and Korea and understands the connection between Korea, Japan, and Mongolia, he agreed. Had he not, Mongolia would have been left out, for Penn has a South Asian Studies Department, but there is no Central Asian or Postsocialist Studies department or center.

The more I read, the more I learned that there were many possibilities for the placement of Mongolia in area studies clusters: Postsocialist Studies, Central Eurasia, Inner Asia, and Northeast Asia, for example. The fluidity of groupings in the Eurasian continent clearly concerned others, for the theme of the 2007 Annual Soyuz Symposium (a society for postsocialist studies) was “Locating ‘Eurasia’ in Postsocialist Studies: The Geopolitics of Naming” (Princeton University, April 27–29).

I found all this variation rather frustrating, and so I started asking my Mongolian friends where they think Mongolia belongs. Zanaa Jurmed, who headed the United Nations CEDAW²-Watch office in Ulaanbaatar and is Director of the Centre for Citizens Alliance, said that Mongolia is really part of East Asia. Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhon, former Mongolian Permanent Representative to the United Nations and current Mongolian Ambassador to Austria, placed Mongolia with its near neighbors as part of Northeast Asia. Several others told me that Mongolia is unique. But as I studied its history and culture, I learned Mongolia has been a crossroads or transition site from the formation of the Asian continent to recent history. It has also connected Asia with the Americas biologically and culturally. And it has greatly influenced the interaction of Asia and Europe—from the migration of Turks into Asia Minor to the Pax Mongolica of Chinggis Khan and the current diaspora of Mongolians into Europe and the Americas.

As I began my search for Mongolia’s place among nations, I learned that scholars in several disciplines (e.g., anthropology, international relations) are challenging the whole concept of area studies. Building on David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernism* (1989), they think that under conditions

of globalization and transnationalism, networks of economic, political, social, and religious interaction often have no fixed territorial boundaries (Appadurai 1991:192–94; Held et al. 1999:15; Kriesi 2003:195; Glick Schiller 2004:445–52). Thus the use of the nation-state as the appropriate unit of analysis for human interactions is being challenged.

Social science has also moved from a focus on taxonomy and trait lists to the study of process, especially the globalization of the economy, the media, material culture and ideas, and the transnationalization of people and corporations. People are connected transnationally through kinship, work, travel, and membership in multi-sited organizations (e.g., NGOs or multilateral organizations such as the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]). They coalesce into transnational and sometimes global civil society (Batliwala and Brown 2006:2–4). What seem more important than taxonomy are the processes whereby people, ideas, and objects connect and move through space.

A group of Mongol scholars met at the Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania, in May 2007 to discuss Mongolia's place in the world from geologic time to the present. Because Mongolia appears as an anomaly—one could even say orphan—in various grouping schemes, it serves as a perfect case study to critique the area studies methodology and test the efficacy of another grouping methodology, the “-scapes” method proposed by Arjun Appadurai (1991, 1996). By examining Mongolia's position vis-à-vis other areas of the world, we might find a methodology that helps both academia and diplomacy analyze the world today and act differently as well. In a world where academic labeling is used to legitimate differences and even war between nation-states (I am thinking especially of the work of the late Samuel P. Huntington), the development of a new grouping paradigm is not just an academic exercise; it is critical for world diplomacy and maybe even world peace.

I worked with Fred Hiebert, Research Associate at the Penn Museum and Archaeology Fellow at National Geographic, to convene a group of scholars from different disciplines to discuss how to conceptualize Mongolia through time and across space. As experts on different aspects of Mongolia, they could evaluate grouping methodologies from the perspectives of disciplines that range from the humanities (history and international relations) and social sciences (archaeology and anthropology) to the hard sciences (geology and ecology). What they share is the idea that all in-

teractions are located in space and thus there is value in plotting connections and processes on the earth's surface (Rodgers 2003:12; Glick Schiller 2004:457–58). We met for a four-day International Research Symposium called “Mapping Mongolia” in order to literally plot Mongolia and Mongolians on maps. In that way, we could compare area studies taxonomies and the more processual approach of “-scapes.” This volume is the product of our work together.

We hope that readers will not only learn the sweep of Mongolian history from the chapters but will download the 33 maps found on a DVD at the back of the book. They were created in ArcGIS but are currently accessible as .psd (Acrobat Photoshop) files. By comparing maps of different time periods and intellectual orientations, readers can decide for themselves the place of Mongolia in the world community and the relative benefits of these and other grouping methodologies.

The chapters are organized according to the main themes of the conference. The first section, “Theorizing Mongolia’s Connections,” includes four chapters that present the parameters of the issue at hand. In Chapter 1, G. Cameron Hurst advocates that Mongol Studies be linked to an area studies program so that the country does not get lost in academia or diplomacy. Tracing the political and economic development of area studies after World War II, Hurst highlights its flaws as well as its response to recent demographic and political changes. Still, he believes area studies centers are here to stay, and in order to survive, Mongolian scholars need to connect firmly with an area, be it Northeast Asia, Postsocialist Studies, or Eurasia.

Chapter 2 poses the question, do Mongolian studies benefit from the area studies approach or from Appadurai’s “-scape” approach? Or is this apposition a false one, i.e., nonproductive? Paula Sabloff briefly describes the “-scapes” approach in greater detail, explaining how a methodology developed to trace individuals’ networks can use nation-states as the units of analysis. She concludes that this approach can be a powerful addition to the area studies methodology.

David Sneath argues in Chapter 3 that the concepts of nationality, ethnicity, and nation-state are late 19th century constructs that are awkwardly applied to Mongolia. Indeed, Stalin’s imposition of such concepts on Mongolia and Inner Asia turned pre-nation-state polities into “peoples,” or ethnic groups, thus obfuscating our understanding of the long-term trajectory of Mongolia. Sneath recreates Mongolia’s long history, correcting the dis-

tortions of past classifications. The result is a challenge to the application of the term “Mongol people” to Appadurai’s ethnoscape concept.

Christopher Atwood, in Chapter 4, provides a slightly different answer to the question, is “Central Asia” a useful concept? If so, does Mongolia belong in Central Asia? He recalls that Mongolia used to be the heartland of Central Eurasia and explains how it is now facing the same issues as other Central Eurasian countries. But ironically, Mongolia drew away from the classic image of Central Asia in medieval times. Atwood concludes by relating the area studies classifications to the concept of “-scape.”

The second section, “Extending Beyond Current Borders,” contains chapters that analyze the Mongolian people as inhabitants of a larger region that sometimes coincides with Central Asia and even reaches Europe and the Americas. Chapter 5, written by Clyde E. Goulden, B. Nandintsetseg, and L. Ariuntsetseg, provides the incredible sweep of geological time from the breakup of Pangaea to the present, showing the geographic connections of the Mongolian Plateau to all of Asia, from the shifting tectonic plates to weather patterns. The authors then explain why pastoral nomadism on the Mongolian Plateau is really the best type of livestock herding for this harsh environment.

Continuing the theme of pastoral nomadism, Thomas Barfield’s Chapter 6 describes what it means to be a pastoral nomad on the Mongolian Plateau and the geographical extent of this lifestyle in Central Asia. He delineates the implications of pastoral nomadism for Mongolia’s economy, lifestyle, and environment. He then recounts changes in lifestyle from the Qing Dynasty to the socialist era and then to postsocialism. As in Chapter 5, Barfield poses and answers the question, what is the most reasonable form of livestock herding for Mongolia’s environment and economy? He also concludes that pastoral nomadism is still the best economic base for those engaged in raising livestock.

Chapter 7, written by Theodore Schurr and Lenore Pipes, presents linguistic and biological connections between Mongols, their neighbors, and “kin.” These connections stretch from eastern Europe to the Americas and from the Lake Baikal region of Siberia to Southeast Asia, down to Melanesia.

William Fitzhugh and Jamsranjav Bayarsaikhan’s Chapter 8 describes the spatial distribution of deer stones and *khirigsuurs*—burial mounds and their satellites—within and beyond Mongolia’s current political borders. As

these landscape artifacts are practically the only remains of the Bronze Age within Mongolia, Fitzhugh and Bayarsaikhan mine their distribution to gain as much understanding of the period as possible and proposes the exploration of possible Mongol connections to Siberian and Native American Eskimo cultures. They begin the process of extrapolating the Bronze Age ideoscape from the database, thereby demonstrating the utility of Appadurai's approach for the archaeological understanding of Mongolia.

The final section, "Connecting to Other Polities," consists of four chapters that explore the linkage of various Mongolian polities or cultural patterns to other external groups. In Chapter 9, William Honeychurch and Chunag Amartuvshin suggest that it is difficult to fit Mongolia into one or another area studies map because it has a long history of acting as an interface between regions across the length and breadth of Eurasia. From Xiongnu times to today, Mongolia has connected different parts of the continent at different points in time. Therefore they find Appadurai's flexible "-scapes" approach more conducive to an understanding of Mongolia's place in the world than the area studies approach.

Paul Goldin presents an interesting balance to Honeychurch in Chapter 10 by describing the changing attitude of the Chinese toward their northern neighbors. Before the Xiongnu, Chinese writers considered non-Chinese as people with different customs but who are still human, that is, non-Chinese have the capacity to be taught the right (Chinese) way to behave. After the Xiongnu, the great Chinese writers considered non-Chinese as people who lacked the capacity to be civilized and who are therefore not quite human. The chapter brings up two central issues of the volume: what is the nature of boundaries between groups and what is the value of grouping Mongolia with China.

Jumping from the 4th century CE to the present, Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan (Chapter 11) brings to the fore the problem of area studies in the current diplomatic atmosphere, where so many issues demand analysis beyond the region. He explains Mongolians' connections beyond the nation's borders and details Mongolia's international, diplomatic involvement in securing its nuclear-weapon-free status and preventing—or at least limiting—its immediate neighbors' nuclear activities from polluting the Mongolian people and environment. This final chapter brings home the idea that a nation's immediate neighbors have the power to determine its fate more readily than any other country. Therefore the area studies perspective retains

value. However, it needs to be broadened to include diplomatic relations with noncontiguous nation-states and international organizations such as the United Nations. It is here that the “-scapes” methodology proves useful.

These chapters confirm colleagues’ impressions that there is value in both the area studies and “-scapes” analyses of Mongolia. But do the chapters favor the area studies or the “-scape” model of interconnectedness? Which one has more value in scholarly and diplomatic analysis of international relations? While we hope that readers will make their own decision, the authors of this volume suggest that there is no “best” methodology that fits all types of analysis. Different ways of situating Mongolia in the world community influence the preference for one methodology or the other (or even other ways of grouping people and landscapes).

I would like to thank the Penn Museum for the opportunity to convene the symposium and publish this volume. It was part of a short series of Penn Museum International Research Symposia stimulated by Richard M. Leventhal, then Williams Director of the Museum, and sponsored by a Museum patron. Thanks especially to Fred Hiebert for suggesting that we undertake the project and for stimulating its conceptualization and operationalization. He is always fun to work with. Of course I would not have been able to refine the conference theme without Arjun Appadurai’s body of work. We all regret that family issues prevented him from joining us. Holly Pittman, Professor of Art History and Deputy Director for Academic Programs, graciously shepherded the symposium from its inception to publication. Andrew Insua, Linda Meiberg, Jeremy Pines, and Bryan Miller, all graduate students in various programs, provided excellent technical assistance. Andrew kindly gave us all an update on ArcGIS and Google Earth as well.

I offer special thanks to Christopher Atwood, whose *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (2004) and emails guided the orthography over the chapters, millennia, and continents. And I want to express my appreciation to Federico Paredes Umaña, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology, who generated all our maps. It turned out to be a huge task.

I also wish to thank the participants in the symposium, who clearly stimulated interesting and very different conversations from the kind we usually engage in with specialists in our own intellectual niches. This symposium was a wonderful way to experience the cross-fertilization that can

only result from discussions based on multiple perspectives. And had I realized ahead of time that I was really providing a four-day reunion party for David Sneath and Christopher Atwood, I would have brought balloons.

Finally, we all wish to thank the wonderful people in Mongolia who supported us and our work there. None of us could have succeeded without their physical, emotional, and intellectual support. They have become our guides, colleagues, and friends. For these reasons and more, I dedicate this volume to them.

NOTES

1. Exceptions include Owen Lattimore, Robert Rupen, William Ballis, and Caroline Humphrey.
2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

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Theorizing Mongolia's Connections

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General Comments on Mapping Mongolia and Mongol Studies

G. CAMERON HURST¹

I am an interloper in Mongol studies, but I want to take advantage of forty years of training in and administering East Asian area studies programs to make some observations about the growth and development of area studies in which, I think, Mongol studies has to fit. By looking at the problems within the American academy today, maybe we can see how that impacts Mongol studies.

SOME THOUGHTS ON “AREA STUDIES” IN THE UNITED STATES

For many of us, American colleges and universities still seem highly Euro-American even in the 21st century. And that is despite all the mouthings of presidents and chancellors of universities about globalizing the academy. Here at Penn [University of Pennsylvania], for example, we have fifteen professors of philosophy and twelve pages in the catalogue of graduate and undergraduate courses for philosophy. Yet there is no course that moves outside of the classical world and modern Europe—with the exception of one course in Indian philosophy. You can take Late and Early Plato, but if you want ancient philosophy, moral philosophy, or political philosophy